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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted in 1995 with great hope by women across the world. Since then we have welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), which have paved the way for supporting the significant roles of women in all aspects of peacemaking and conflict resolution and empowered women to seek justice in cases of rape and sexual abuse experienced in conflict situations. The Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to end violence against women" and General Assembly resolution 63/311 delivered the commitment of the States Members of the United Nations to the establishment of a new and ambitiously funded gender architecture.

2. Despite these advances, women and girls, especially in the Asia and Pacific region, face enormous and complex challenges as the dominant development paradigm continues to be guided by market ideology, impacting on women in terms of food insecurity, displacement, unemployment and livelihood.

3. Democracies are in distress in many countries of the region, with systematic persecution of legitimate dissenters, human rights defenders and their families. Inter-State and intra-State armed conflicts are increasing, and prolonged political crises, religious extremism, fundamentalism and military dictatorships in some countries continue to create critical situations and insecurity for women and girls, including through the violation of their human rights. Women and girls constitute some 80 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons, including internally displaced persons — their needs remain unaddressed.

4. Violence against women and girls across all geographic and demographic areas is a major concern. There are increasing reports of alleged "sorcery" killings and witch hunting, honour killings, acid throwing and rape as an instrument of war or colonization; and female genital mutilation continues to destroy young women's lives. Alongside new media and technology, cyberbullying and other new, pervasive forms of violence are emerging.

5. Threats to women's human rights take place amidst tremendous uncertainties and multiple crises in the areas of financial, food, ecological, consumption, health, and reproductive health, which have led to widespread economic displacements and migration. Economic and climate crises have increased the feminization of poverty, the loss of livelihoods, homelessness, social isolation and violence against women. Numbers of girls and young women have been forced to leave school to enter the labour force, entertainment industries or the sex trade. The root causes of human trafficking in its various forms are not being addressed.

6. In the midst of these challenges, 15 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, we urge Governments to fulfil their commitments and implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session in a holistic spirit. We also urge them to promote women's human rights, protect human rights defenders and abolish discriminatory laws and customary practices, particularly personal laws.

7. We urge Governments to bring an end to impunity for the perpetrators of violations of women's human rights and to punish those responsible for war crimes and gender-based violence. We further urge the United Nations bodies to fully

implement Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009).

8. We call for all remaining States to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and to remove reservations to it.

9. Military spending must be reduced drastically and resources redirected to human needs. We urge States to halt arms manufacturing and curb their proliferation.

10. We urge States, intergovernmental bodies, corporations, international financial institutions and development agencies to follow the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Asia and Pacific region and prevent economic displacement, environmental devastation, the loss of indigenous knowledge and integrity, the subversion of the rights of indigenous women and girls and violence against indigenous women and girls.

11. We urge States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and to ensure full implementation of this Convention, especially for women and girls with disabilities, to ensure their rightful place in society.

12. We call upon Governments to pay heed to climate change warnings and put an immediate stop to all ecologically destructive and extractive activities by large foreign corporations. We call upon Governments to ensure that the specific needs of women and girls are integrated into disaster prevention, response and relief operations.

13. We urge States to strengthen national institutional mechanisms, ensure the provision of appropriate resources that are crucial to advance the position of women and girls and promote equal participation of women in leadership and decision-making bodies at all levels.

14. The new gender entity in the United Nations must have effective field-level presence and clear mechanisms and processes for the engagement of women's organizations from the global to the national levels.

15. Last, but not least, to realize the intent and spirit of the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome documents, the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international instruments, we call upon Governments to move from rhetoric to action, for women's progress is progress for everyone.